

The New Student

Vol. 5, No. 14

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BIRTH CONTROL

Sponsored at Evanston

In the closing session of the Inter-Denominational Conference a huge majority passed the resolution asking the church to actively sponsor the dissemination of birth control knowledge. The resolution reads:

"Resolved that the church take active steps to disseminate knowledge of birth control and that the conference go on record and petition the church to sanction sterilization of the mentally unfit."

During the course of the convention someone called for a vote to determine the delegates' various attitudes toward the question of bearing arms in future wars. The vote was as follows: Those who will refuse under any circumstances to participate in future wars, 181; those who take the opposing view, that the pacifist attitude is untenable in time of war, 65; those uncertain ones who have not "thought through" the question of war, 215.

One thing was very evident: the delegates were determined not to be patted on the head by any of their elders. When a patronizing tone was adopted by Dr. Diffendorfer of the Methodist Episcopal Foreign Missionary Board in addressing Carl R. Rogers, Union Theological Seminary student, as "my boy" the delegates protested. One asked that the speaker be instructed to abandon the patronizing tone. Another complained, "we don't like it, we've been 'my boyed' to death."

Dr. Diffendorfer said that 29,000 missionaries attend the spiritual needs of 8,000,000 converts in heathen lands; that in twenty two years the number of workers has doubled, the number of converts quadrupled. After his speech came a stinging volley of questions. Delegates asked if money, so expended would not be put to better use in American slums; if denominations do not carry on the work to their greater glory; if heathens are not denominationalized rather than Christianized

An object lesson in the hard reality of race prejudice was displayed during the convention. C. G. Blooah a Liberian, graduate student at the University of Chicago, had been invited to a delegates dinner at a restaurant in Evanston. He told Treadwell Smith, who had invited him, that he had already been barred from this restaurant. A delegation of thirty students then went to the restaurant asking permission to include Br. Blooah in their party. They were refused by the manager. The matter was brought before the convention. A motion was proposed boycotting this restaurant. The motion was lost. But after this incident hundreds of students at noon walked over to another section of the city and took lunch in Negro eating places.

Dr. Diffendorfer's defense of the missionaries was answered at length by W. T. Wu, a Chinese student of Union Theological

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Fundamentalism, Dayton, Tenn., the scrimmage between Clarence Darrow and the late Bryan, almost forgotten by newspaper readers, all return to the memory with the filing with the Supreme Court at Nashville on January 10, of the brief for the defense. The case will be taken up in February. A document of 134 pages, the brief is signed by four Tennessee lawyers and five from foreign parts.

The Tennessee lawyers are John Randolph Neal, of Knoxville who has acted as chief counsel for the defense. John Spuhlock of Chattanooga, Frank McElwee of Rockwood and Robert S. Keebler of Memphis. The outside lawyers are Clarence Darrow of Chicago, Samuel J. Rosensohn, Walter H. Pollak, Dudley Field Malone and Arthur Garfield Hays of New York.

The case in the higher court has been whittled down to a question of the constitutionality of the anti-evolution laws. The defense, according to the Civil Liberties Union, contends that the statute is unconstitutional, violating both the state and federal constitution in that it "invades religious freedom by giving a preference to a religious establishment in the public schools." Various other provisions of the constitution of Tennessee are alleged to be violated. The defense will also seek to prove that the law constitutes an unwarranted abuse of the power of police of the State.

Ghost Ridden

Students are Terrified

Columbia University Architecture Is Cause of Many Nightmares

Much excitement was aroused at Columbia University when a group of students staying at Furnald Hall was unjustly punished for diligence in pursuing studies during the Christmas holidays. A ghost shivered nightly across a window of the adjoining Journalism building.

The ghoul-haunted students in desperation finally penned the following letter to David M. Updike, acting superintendent of the Department of Buildings and Grounds: *We the undersigned, tenant rooms on the Campus side of the Furnald dormitory. For the past two weeks we have been obliged to behold upon glancing through our windows the morbid spectacle of a human skeleton occupying, it seems, a special place of honor in one of the rooms in the Journalism building. This room is on the upper floor and faces outside of the dormitory.*

Now skeletons are not exactly pleasing or inspiring sights at 1 or 2 A. M. One glimpse at this one in the wee hours of the morning is enough to drive us from our rooms.

The skeleton stands directly in front of the window. It seems to leer at us. The entire framework is visible.

In view of the fact that the mid-year examinations are about due to haunt us by day and night, will you please see to

STUDENT MEETING

CALLS FOR CHURCH REFORM

Military Training Is Deplored in Resolution Adopted at Evanston, Ill.

WOULD BREAK CREED WALLS

Below, in the church auditorium, sat nine hundred students, college and theological school delegates to the Interdenominational Student Conference, Evanston, Illinois, December 29 to January 1. They came from 176 colleges and 20 denominations. Generally four or five would be on their feet, requesting the floor from Stanley High, author of *The Revolt of Youth*, or the Reverend Dr. Albert Parker Fitch, former president of Andover Seminary who presided in turn.

Above, the balcony was heavy with silence of 200 attentive observers, adults. They represented the Protestant Church in its active manifestations: denominational boards, mission boards, various sorts of councils, publications. Forbidden to speak by the committee on arrangements, they attended diligently, and at various points in a vigorous discussion from below nodded, leaned forward, jumped in their seats, or smiled.

The balcony was being brought to judgment by the floor. The floor was "evaluating the Church" as an organ and tool for its ideals—criticising its shortcomings, proposing new work and methods for it, and occasionally stopping to question the ideals themselves: What is Religion? Church? Mysticism? Objective social welfare?

After four days, nine hours a day in full session, here were the main proposals made:

That the Church excommunicate war, oppose military training in schools from high school through the university and favor internationalism through World Court, League, disarmament; that it act as fact-finder in industrial relations; that it disseminate knowledge of birth control, that it continue missions but divorce them from propaganda for sects, powers, specific civilizations. To combat denominationalism it was proposed young people's societies join forces as rapidly as possible under the Fe-

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it that the figure is removed or kindly instruct the professor who uses the room to draw the curtains on the window? At least have some one close the window top and bottom. On windy nights the skeleton swings tauntingly from side to side.

The bony fingers point directly at us. Through the window comes what looks like a sardonic grin, gaunt, ghost-like and painful.

It first seemed as though the guilty party stood in a room used by an anthropology class of Professor Boaz. But this skeleton was exculpated. Then the true offender was discovered. On the cornice of the dormitory is a macabre gargoyle which throws its reflection on a window of the journalism building.

The New Student

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January 13, 1926

"THE NEW STUDENT Invites the Student to Participate in His Own Education."

—James Harvey Robinson

WHEN a college comic seeks to augment circulation by becoming an imitation of *Artists and Models*, or *The Whiz Bang*, or any one of the twenty or thirty magazines dedicated to the titillation of morons, it is flirting with censorship. That is the inevitable price of being darily "collegiate." That several funny papers have paid this price during the past month has moved not one of the editors of *The New Student* to tears. There is only astonishment at the persistence of the myth that censorship is an effective method of suppression and not merely a good way to increase sales. Also, the existence of such a comic, which censorship widely advertises, causes one to ask what the mental level is of a college community whose humorists are incipient Capt. Biffy Fawcetts and Bernarr McFaddens.

NINE HUNDRED Christian students at Evanston voted with hardly a dissenting voice against military training, specifically R. O. T. C., in high schools, denominational schools, colleges and universities. If these students will now actually try to make their resolutions good, we believe they are to be congratulated. Compulsory drill is destructive not only to their religion, but is destructive to every sort of liberty in school and college. Wherever there is compulsory drill and the military are in high favor, we are ready to assert, the university hardly ever amounts to a damn. It simply is the nature of the egg in the Sam Brown Belt, once given complete command, to get hard-boiled, and to answer any unfamiliar idea whatever with bull ring and latrine duty.

THE THEOLOGY OF UPLIFT

WHILE the sensible undergraduate in general will probably congratulate the conferees of Evanston (see page 1) on their results, he may want to put in a reservation, by asking them to go a little easy with one short word, "Sin." It was rather freely used over there, and it put something of a shiver up and down our backs every time. War was a sin, and so not to be countenanced by the Church; the propagation of the mentally unfit was also quite akin to a sin, and birth control was advocated to reduce it, and so forth. The horrifying factor was that every time you caught someone else in a Sin, you seemed to be entitled to prevent him from carrying on with it, he to have small voice in the matter, or none at all.

This gave us pause. However strongly this particular paper dislikes R. O. T. C., we have never been able to make up our minds that the fellow who *wants* to drill, knowing exactly what it means and where it will lead, should be forbidden his privilege. We have been protesting against the compulsion, and against the sweet and false seductions used on the Kindergarten Boys to get them into the Corps where it has been voluntary. But if someone should have come back from four years on the front under fire as doughboy and then wanted to get into the R. O. T. C. we should feel we had very little to say to him against it. The problem hasn't come up for us, because none such have yet appeared.

But at Evanston, the theory was that such a chap was a sinner, whether he knew it or not, and should be prevented from carrying through at any cost. Well, that *might* be all right, in this one case; we hate the rot corps enough to think he would be cracked; but if it becomes a general principle——?

GENERALLY when people begin specifying what are Sins, watch out! They are likely to land on anything you especially like, from the books of James Branch Cabell to omission of the Morning Watch. And from that moment on, you have no choice in the matter, because the guy operating against your Sin is his brother's keeper and bound to protect the third party from your demonism at all costs, by destroying it.

"Sentimental, Slushy"

No more will the Harvard Glee Club compete in the annual Inter-collegiate Glee Club contest at New York. The club withdrew from the contest several weeks ago. Objection to one of the songs selected this year for the contest is the reason. *Lamp in the West*, by Horation Parker was described by Dr. Archibald T. Davison director of the club to be "sentimental and mushy."

"Raising the standards of music sung in college glee clubs was the avowed purpose of founding the Intercollegiate Musical Corporation, with the Harvard Glee Club as a charter member," said Mr. Woodworth acting director of the club, "The objection raised by Harvard this year was that the prize song, chosen by the Corporation to be sung by each contesting club, is musically of a very inferior quality. Such a choice defeats the purpose of the contest."

"This difficulty over the prize song is not a now one, in 1921 Harvard protested the prize song on the ground of its musical inferiority. At that time there were only eight clubs competing and Harvard's withdrawal would have seriously prejudiced the success of the concert. Because of this Harvard agreed to compete, with the understanding that the prize song in the future have the approval of every contesting club. This understanding with reference to unanimous consent was incorporated in the rules and regulations of the Corporation."

"The plan has worked well until this fall, when Horatio Parker's *Lamp in the West* was announced as the prize song for the 1926 contest. Harvard immediately protested, again on the ground of musical inferiority, called attention to the unanimous consent agreement and requested that another song be chosen."

"The Corporation replied that the song announced was an arbitrary selection and that Harvard must either sing it or withdraw."

WIND-MILL

That students of American universities must be policed if they are to be educated is the opinion of James Edward Gould, Dean of Men at the University of Washington, according to the *Seattle Union Record*. To leave American students to their own initiative as is done in European institutions of higher learning, the dean believes, would have a disastrous effect.

The Windmill agrees. It would have a disastrous effect. A well known statistician has disclosed that if the cut system were abolished today 14,132 deans would be thrown out of work. Coming as it would so close to the tragedy of the starving miners of West Virginia, this would be a national disaster too awful to contemplate.

Have you ever stopped to think, Mr. Student, what an important part the dean plays in the modern college? Deans have multiplied at such a rate that, they tell us, some universities have a dean of deans.

If the European system were installed at the University of Washington, continues Dean Gould, "ten days would not elapse before most students would be so hopelessly behind in their work that it would be impossible for them to catch up."

Again *The Windmill* shouts Amen. To corroborate Dean Gould's statements he need only turn back to his own sophomore days. There was a time when he had a keen interest in certain aspects of practical religion, aroused by a perusal of Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*. Religion, just



The Dean Plays an Important Part
N. S.

then, seemed an exciting thing. There were about a dozen books he wanted to read. He wouldn't have emerged from his dormitory for days except to eat and to stoke a certain furnace. . . . But thank to a good stiff cut system he warded off this insanity. He mastered his irrational, abnormal curiosity and went to classes instead.

Subsequently, on several occasions during his college career he almost succumbed to an itch to throw over class attendance and loose himself in the inviting maze of the library stacks.

Only the thought of a recording angel in the administrative offices, putting a check after his name whenever an absence occurred, deterred him.

One weakminded classmate yielded to the temptation to follow the seductive vagaries of his interest. He gave up working for a degree. Thumbing his nose at the deanery he attended class only when he felt that a distinct gain was forthcoming. Instead of attending to three or four studies in one day he spent three or four days to one subject. In two days he was "hopelessly behind in textbook assignments." But that didn't seem to bother him. In fact

he seemed happy. He never did finish those text books.

At the end of the semester he knew more about the subjects than any of us. But the laugh was on him. We had fifteen credit hours for the semester's work and he had none.

RELIGION

MISSIONARY AND HEATHEN

(Continued from page 1, col. 1)

Seminary. Mr. Wu said that the missionaries rely upon material rather than spiritual force to spread the gospel.

"The missionaries from the so-called civilized West, go East with a superiority complex and seek to superimpose on Oriental peoples a set of ideas that mean very little to them in the face of their own culture. This is the reason that so few belonging to the Chinese intellectual class are attracted to Christianity.

"The missionary attempts to paternalize. He goes out as both a teacher and a boss. Because the source of money is in the West, therefore the missionaries believe that all authority must be in the hands of the missionary and they refuse to allow the native to control many things that he could much better handle than the foreigner."

In their discussions of the church and industry this conclusion was reached. That: "The present state of industry, with its competition and land grabbing is the source of hatreds which lead to war and that the system breeds class distinction and economic inequality."

STUDENT MEETING

(Continued from Page 1, Column 3)

deral Council of Churches. Student conference attendees were advised to get personal experience either from the rough or from thorough study, and lacking the resultant information, not to speak.

Important Resolutions

We believe that the church through its churches should excommunicate war, disassociate itself from the war system, and refuse henceforth to allow the use of the church as a medium of preparation for, or prosecution of, war.

Because we favor a positive education for peace, and because we believe that the present military training program of the War Department in high schools and colleges gives war an ultimate sanction, perpetuates the war system, delays disarmament, intimidates students and faculty, and inhibits free discussion, we suggest:

- abolition of military training in church and denominational schools.
- abolition of military training in high schools.
- abolition of military training in colleges and universities, including immediate abolition of its compulsory features in land grant institutions.

Every local church should guard and guarantee the right of an individual to follow the guidance of his own conscience when that conscience advises against participation in war.

Because war is a negation of the value of human personality we condemn any at-

tempt to impose universal conscription of manhood on the United States, such as the proposed legislation before Congress.

We believe the United States should take a leading share in promoting and participating in any international organization nations. In particular we urge the immediate fostering of goodwill and cooperation between the ratification of the protocol of the Permanent Court of International Justice at the Hague, participation of the United States in formulating plans for the projected disarmament conference, and entry into the League of Nations. We urge the churches to continue their efforts along these lines."

Limitations and Possibilities

In the discussion of industrial and racial problems the importance of getting the facts in the case was emphasized repeatedly and the church was declared unable to solve such problems except in so far as it might act as an agency for collecting and disseminating expert knowledge. The present educational system in schools and colleges was criticized for not supplying enough information on their topics and the students at the conference resolved to search it out for themselves preferably by the "project method" of personal experience. On getting back to their respective campuses they will seek out the nearest labor union and compare their own standard of living with that of the workingmen. They will also investigate cases of racial prejudice and discrimination.

LITERARY

The judges of the Poetry Society of America's Undergraduate Contest, Sara Teasdale, George Sterling and the donor, announced that the Witter Bynner Prize, of \$150, for 1925, is unanimously awarded to Countee Cullen, New York University and Harvard.

The first ten of the nineteen students receiving honorable mention are:

George Dillon, University of Chicago; Roberta Swartz, Mount Holyoke College; Tom Freeman, Ohio Northern University; Marshall V. Howe, Columbia University; Helene P. Basquin, Smith College; William Cunningham, University of Oklahoma; Edith Horton, Cornell University; Eunice Gailey, Williamette University; Kathryn Kelley, Cornell University; Elizabeth Whitney, Mount Holyoke College.

For 1926 Bynner offers the \$150 prize under the auspices of *Palms*, the poetry magazine of which he is associate editor. In addition to this there is a prize of His Excellency Jose G. Zuno, Governor of Jalisco, providing the winner free fare from the American border to Guadalajara, Mexico, where *Palms*, is published and a term of free tuition in the University of Guadalajara.

Poet of Youthful Moods

Color, by Countee Cullen; Harper & Bros., \$2.00

One immediately places this young Negro poet's juvenilia, all the poems were written before the age of twenty two, in the category of the lyric poets, along with A. E. Hausman and Edna St. Vicent Millay. There are recurrent echoes especially of Housman in lines such as these:

Since in the end consort together
Magdalen and Mary.

Youth is the time for careless weather,
Later, lass, be wary.

Like the aforementioned poets Cullen sings of that youthful period when an acute realization of life's brevity is mingled with a poignant revelation of earth's beauty. But in addition to this Cullen's verse bears the stinging weight of the black man's burden. As in the lines *To My Fairer Brethren*:

Though I scorn you with my best,
Treble circumstance
Must confirm the verdict, lest
It be laid to chance.

Insufficient that I match you
Every coin you flip;
Your demand is that I catch you
Squarely on the hip.

Should I wear my wreaths a bit
Rakishly and proud,
I have bought my right to it;
Let it be allowed.

Mr. Cullen takes his place among the most youthful members of the new Negro "renaissance". His poems throb with the proud realization of an immanent paganism. When he rebukes his "quiet" father and "puritanic" mother, in *Fruit of The Flower*, he sings the manifesto for his generation; a generation determined to garner the glowing fruitage of a sensual racial inheritance. Again a quotation is in order.

Why should he deem it pure mischance
A son of his is fain
To do a naked tribal dance
Each time he hears the rain?

Why should she think it devil's art
That all my songs should be
Of love and lovers, broken heart,
And wild sweet agony?

Who plants a seed begets a bud,
Extract of that same root;
Why marvel at the hectic blood
That flushes this wild fruit?

But there are other poems in the book, poems which show no "influence", which sing into life no "movements", no brooding over barriers of race. They prove that, in the words of Carl Van Vechten, "like any distinguished artist of any race, he is able to write stanzas which have no bearing on the problems of his race." All the poems abound with a profusion of imagery that is very often fresh and original, though occasionally too facile. Here is a book that places its author head and shoulders above any other poet black, or white, now writing verses in American colleges.

N. S.

LETTER BOX

The Filthy Weed

Sirs: I have often been pleased with your little paper, and the frankness with which you express yourself in its pages, so I'm inviting myself to tell you frankly what I think of all the discussions pertaining to the tobacco question. Surely we like to consider ours a free country; so that no one shall have the right to deny to another the privilege of smoking or chewing or snuffing tobacco if he so desires; but has the person to whom it is obnoxious no rights to be respected? Surely when the disciple of the noble Red Man decides to pollute the atmosphere of dining room, car, lecture hall, theater and reading rooms, the one who prefers the air as Nature made it, has no right. The smoker in substance says to him "Damn you! if you don't like it get out."

The gifted lady* to whom you referred some time back, who needed a whiff to settle her nerves, should be pitied for having cultivated a habit which has diseased her nervous system to such an extent that she must have a bracer before appearing in public. But since she had arrived at such a stage, why make a public exhibition of her infirmity? Why furnish such an example for the young people who admired her genius? So far, I've never seen a good reason for the using of tobacco—only excuses. The big tobacco trusts alone, have good reasons for boosting the business; and you who defend it and glorify it are helping to put more tobacco trust collars on a gullible rising generation. Let's be honest. Isn't this a fact?

Chicago, Ill. Augusta F. Schellbach

California R. O. T. C.

Sirs: I have just received a marked copy of your issue of December 2nd, in which, under the heading "Academic Freedom", I am quoted with reference to compulsory military service at the University of California and the influence drawn that I have made a misstatement. You may or may not be interested in the facts, but they are set forth below.

It is true that the University of California receives Federal aid under the Morrill Land Grant Act, but so far as military training is concerned, there is a special contract between the State of California and the Federal Government embodied in the so-called "Organic Act" of the University which makes military training at this institution compulsory. In this respect the University of California is different from the University of Wisconsin, which, so far as I know, is governed only by the Morrill Land Grant Act in connection with military drill and has recently made military training elective.

So far as the National Defense Act is concerned, your statement is correct that this does not make military training compulsory in any institution. The National Defense Act is, however an entirely separate piece of legislation from the Morrill Land Grant Act and does not replace that Act, or any special agreements between state institutions and the Federal Government, or between states and the Federal Government. Under present conditions at the University of California, I do not believe that the University officials can exempt students from military training, except for physical deficiencies or similar causes, without breaking the contract between the State of California and the United States Government.

Yours very truly

Robert G. Sprowl
(Vice-President, University of California)

*Mrs. Aline Kilmer, poetess and lecturer;

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DAY LABORING FOR LEARNING

Observations on the Cut System as a Factor in Education

The following is the prologue to a survey conducted by The CYNIC, University of Vermont, on the cut systems of New England colleges. The editors of THE NEW STUDENT do not know what sort of a cut system the CYNIC will eventually propose, but nevertheless consider the following article an excellent pronouncement on the underlying theory of an ideal cut system.

The description of the cut system at Middlebury was not chosen for this issue with any particular object in view, but it offers excellent illustration of the sort of system which appears to the *Cynic* entirely out of accord with the purposes and functions of the educational system.

It points out with perfect clarity one outlook upon education—that of the instructor who teaches "by the hour" or "by the day". It says, in essence, that education is handed out in packages, and that he who is not on hand to receive his package on a particular day has lost permanently a portion of what he is in college to acquire.

It is the viewpoint of the instructor who feels in his innermost mind that nothing in the field on his subject—or out—can be so timely or of so much importance as the lecture he is presenting at that particular period, or the response to the questions he wishes to ask.

It is the viewpoint of the instructor who takes for granted that every man and woman enrolled has come to college to get away with as much as possible, and that such education as is acquired by the student must be crammed down his throat by force, or with the threat of force pricking him on to every effort.

It is a viewpoint which takes no account of anything but the fact that a particular course is offered three or four times a week for approximately thirty weeks a year, with certain questions asked and, perhaps answered, and certain lectures delivered.

It is the viewpoint, to rephrase a preceding paragraph, which considered all students as children to be handled as such, with merits and demerits and a stick of candy for regularity and punctuality.

It is teaching "by the hour."

General Attitude

That attitude is not confined to certain instructors at Vermont, or to Middlebury, or to any particular institution. It is found to some extent everywhere there are students and instructors and courses. It's of course, the easiest way.

Like the dodo, however, it is becoming extinct. The purpose of these discussions is to hasten its passing at Vermont, and to substitute for it an attitude more in accord with the modern conception of education.

Even the student mind, we think, abhors a vacuum, and before we would shunt this point of view into outer darkness we must offer something to fill up the great, open spaces which would be left if we were to succeed in our attempt. So there must be provided an alternative.

How would it be to sort out the sheep and the goats? Some men, and some women, come to college with no apparent intention beyond securing a degree and having a good time with the least possible effort. Let's call them the goats. Some come with the deliberate intention of getting as much

education as they can in the four years they can devote to the task. These are, perhaps, the sheep.

Some sheep, however, have considerable spirit, and when it appears that the college course is merely a contest between students and instructors to see whether or not the former can get passing marks, a combat develops and education is lost in the scuffle over cuts, marks, etc.

What we would like to see is the realization on the part of the faculty as a whole that some students do come to college to get an education rather than a degree; that sometimes a particular lecture is not so valuable as other uses to which the time might be put. It's hard on the vanity, but true. In other words, we should like to have it agreed that the purpose of a college course is not so much so many hours of attendance at classes as the acquisition of certain habits and of at least certain general knowledge.

We should like to have a degree mean that a student has learned to a specified degree certain things, rather than that he has attended class a specified number of hours, and has encouraged a certain number of instructors to give him passing marks.

Some students already feel this way. Some professors and some instructors recognize that education does not come by the hour. What we want is general recognition of this—forced, if necessary, upon those of each body who refuse to recognize it without compulsion.

Upon this theory the *Cynic* bases its desire for a definite cut system of the sort it will propose when the evidence is all in.

Dabney Horton, instructor at Ohio State University was fined \$800 by a Columbus, Ohio, Justice of Peace on charge of "possessing liquor and implements for its manufacture."

At the time of his arrest Horton was temporarily suspended from the University. After the sentence was passed Acting President Rightmire informed him of his dismissal from the faculty.

YET DO I MARVEL

I doubt not God is good, well-meaning kind,
And did He stoop to quibble could tell why
The little buried mole continues blind,
Why flesh that mirrors Him must some day
die,
Make plain the reason tortured Tantalus
Is baited by the fickle fruit, declare
If merely brute caprice dooms Sisyphus
To struggle up a never-ending stair.
Inscrutable His ways are, and immune
To catechism by a mind too strewn
With petty cares to slightly understand
What awful brain compels His awful hand.
Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black, and bid him sing'.

Countee Cullen